

Caroline County Department of Fire-Rescue & Emergency Management

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Open Burning Regulations in Caroline County

What is Open Burning?

Open Burning is the burning of unwanted materials, such as paper, trees, brush, leaves, grass, and other debris, where smoke and other emissions are released directly into the air. During open burning air pollutants do not pass through a chimney or stack, and/or combustion of the solid waste is inadequately controlled.

Open burning pollutes the air and poses a forest fire hazard. The air pollution created by open burning can irritate eyes and lungs, obscure visibility, and create annoying odors or poses other nuisance or health threats.

Because of the problems created by this activity, state and local laws prohibit open burning of many materials. Many people are unaware of the regulations or unsure about which regulations apply to them. The following information will help identify the problems, regulations, sources of information, and alternatives to open burning.

Prohibited Items to Burn

The following items are prohibited from open burning in Caroline:

- Tires
- Used Oil
- Coated Wires
- Asphaltic Materials
- Roofing Shingles
- Hazardous Wastes & Waste Containers
- Animal Carcasses
- Animal Waste
- Petroleum Based Materials
- Garbage (readily putrescible discarded materials composed of animal or vegetable matter)
- Impregnated or treated wood
- Batteries

Burn Permits

Caroline County requires permits for the open burning of debris waste. Permits must be obtained from the Department of Planning and Community Development by calling 804-633-4303. The Department does not charge for these permits.

No permits are required by homeowners for the open burning of tree and yard wastes. Homeowners are required to notify the Caroline Communications Center (804-633-5555) when burning.

Burning of Construction Debris Waste

Open burning is permitted on-site for destruction of debris waste resulting from property maintenance, from the development or modification of roads and highways, parking areas, railroad tracks, pipelines, power and communication lines, buildings or building areas, sanitary landfills, or from any other approved clearing operations, provided the following conditions are met:

- Obtain an open burning permit from the Department of Fire and Rescue
- The material to be burned shall consist of brush, stumps and similar debris waste and shall not include demolition material
- Be at least 500 feet from any occupied building unless the occupants have given prior permission
- Be conducted at the greatest distance possible from highways and air fields
- Burn must be attended at all times
- Burning shall not be allowed to smolder beyond the minimum period of time necessary for the destruction of the materials
- Burning shall be conducted only when the prevailing winds are away from any city, town or built-up area

Burning of Grass Clippings and Leaves

Open burning is permitted on-site for the destruction of leaves, tree, yard, and garden trimmings, provided that these conditions are met:

- The burning takes place on the premises of the private property
- The location of the burning is not less than 300 feet from any occupied building unless the occupants have given prior permission

- The responsible party notifies the Caroline Communications Center (804-633-5555) of the date, time and location of the open burning

Agriculture Exemptions

Open burning for forest management and agriculture practices approved by the Virginia Air Pollution Control Board are exempt from Caroline's open burning regulations.

Burning of Building Materials

Air quality and solid waste regulations prohibit open burning of construction and demolition waste. Chemically treated lumber as well as synthetic and painted building materials contain high concentrations of hazardous compounds that produce toxic emissions when burned.

Burning of Buildings

Structures to be demolished by intentional burning are subject to State and Federal regulations. Virginia air quality regulations only allow buildings to be intentionally burned for the purpose of fire department training. Federal law requires that all asbestos be removed from any building (residential and non-residential) prior to authorized burning. For more information contact the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

Campfires

Air quality regulations allow the burning of logs, brush, charcoal and other similar materials for the purpose of food preparation, recreation, ceremonial occasions, and warming of outdoor workers.

Open Burning Alternatives

Composting yard waste and using leaves and grass clippings for mulch are alternatives to open burning of yard waste. Composting produces valuable soil fertilizer through the natural process of decomposition. Compost piles are simple to begin and maintain, and take up relatively little space. For more information on composting at home, contact your county Extension Office.

Contact local programs about recycling of plastics, cardboard, paper, metals, etc. in your area. Donate reusable items to charitable organizations, families, or friends. Dispose of unwanted items in a licensed landfill or incinerator instead of open burning.

For more information regarding the regulation of open burning in Caroline County, please contact the Department of Fire – Rescue and Emergency Management at 804-633-9831 or visit www.co.caroline.va.us/firerescue.html.

Virginia Forestry Burning Laws

All citizens must comply with yearly open burning restrictions as required by the Virginia Department of Forestry. The Virginia 4 PM Burn Law is effective Feb. 15 – April 30. Contact the Virginia Dept. of Forestry for details